Barter-deal of dispose of wheat stocks

3851. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering barter-deal with many countries to dispose of its huge wheat at stocks;

(b) whether India has identified commodities of import under the barter-deal as bitumen from Iran, palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia and items of Indian interest with Sudan and Morocco;

(c) whether India has invited a delegation from Iran to inspect the country's wheat stocks and allay Iran's fears about the fungus or foreign matter in Indian wheat; and

(d) what other options are being considered to dispose of huge stocks of foodgrains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) The Government has recently decided to enter into counter-trade and/or extend commodity assistance in the form of foodgrains to other countries on terms to be decided on a case to case basis. No specific barter-deal has been finalized for export of wheat. A proposal to invite an Iranian technical team to India is under consideration.

(d) The following decisions have been taken by the Government recently to dispose of huge stocks of foodgrains:—

(i) APL CIPs have been reduced by Rs. 100 per quintal in respect of rice and wheat for a period of three months.

(ii) The scale of issue for APL, BPL and Antyodaya households has been fixed @35 kg. per household per month and allocations to States/UTs have been increased accordingly.

(iii) The scale of issue for all welfare institutions and hostels has been fixed uniformly @15 kg. per head per month and an additional allocation equal to 5% of the BPL allocation to States/UTs at BPL CIPs has been made on this account.

(iv) Open market sales of 50 lakh MTs of wheat and 10 lakh MTs of rice at prices to be determined by the existing High Level Committee of the FCI have been permitted. FCI has been authorized to sell the stocks in the open market either through auction in prefixed lots or by fixation of sale prices keeping in view the prevailing market conditioins.

(v) WTO compatible subsidies for promotion of exports of wheat and rice are being provided.

(vi) Quantitative restrictions on the exports of rice and wheat have been removed, subject to the condition that the stocks in the Central pool will not be lower than the buffer stock of 243 lakh MTs (100 lakh MTs) of rice and (143 lakh MTs of wheat) at any point of time.

[All the above decisions from S. No. (ii) to (vi) are valid upto 31.3.2003].

Private sector's participation in storage and transportation of foodgrains

3852. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the private sector has offered investments in food storage, handling and transportation to ease pressure on FCI in the wake of mounting buffer stocks of foodgrains;

(b) if so, whether as a pre-condition to investment, they have demanded 100 per cent space utilisation guarantee by Government; and

(c) what incentives have already been offered by Government to the private sector to encourage its participation in storage and transportation of foodgrains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Yes Sir.